

Masthead Logo

**The Iowa Review**

Volume 20  
Issue 1 *Winter*

Article 16

1990

# Learning to Dance

Michael Carey

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Carey, Michael. "Learning to Dance." *The Iowa Review* 20.1 (1990): 50-51. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3837>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

the window is full of fields,  
and the fields are full of beans—  
300 tons hanging gently  
from stalks so tender and  
so brittle, the burden of  
one bird would break them.

## LEARNING TO DANCE

### I

There used to be a horse  
in that pasture, a piebald  
gelding. He was the only way  
my father knew where to turn  
when he was visiting.

I remember baling hay there  
for the first time, before  
the horses, before the sheep,  
before my father ever thought  
to visit. The sun again close,  
our bodies wracked yet constantly  
in motion. Waves of grain  
in waves of heat. Our stomachs,  
the world, moving, our lives a song  
we were teaching ourselves  
to dance to.

### II

Now it's weeds,  
now it's beans,  
now the old shed  
is crumbling.  
Sheep turn as the  
morning advances.

My father is gone.  
It is no longer now,  
it is thousands of years  
before man existed,  
the horizon strangely red  
and burning.

## THE STORY OF OUR LIVES

*for Arlen and Fran Gangwish*

The buzzing of flies  
over a carcass.

The promise of life  
in the seed and the rain and the soil.

Every morning our eyes  
come to rest on the horizon.

Such a large sky full of emptiness,  
clouds heavy with air and floating water.

These are our children growing  
ever closer to leaving.

Nothing so near as distance.

## THE REASON FOR POETRY

There are only two chickens left now  
since the wild dogs got done with them.  
They don't seem to care, those that remain,  
cooing in the coop with a tank full of water  
and cracked corn they couldn't finish in a season.  
I'll never get over how real the world is  
and yet, how easily it disappears,